Government of Saskatchewan

Annual Report 1984-85

Women's Secretariat

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Women's Secretariat

For the Fiscal Year Ending
March 31, 1985

Minister
Honourable Patricia A. Smith

Executive Co-ordinator
Leah Siebold

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Minister's Letter of Transmittal

Honourable Frederick W. Johnson
Lieutenant Governor of the
Province of Saskatchewan

Sir:

I hereby respectfully submit the annual report of the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1985.

P A Smith

Patricia A. Smith
Minister Responsible for
the Status of Women

Honourable Patricia A. Smith, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Executive Co-ordinator's Letter of Transmittal

Honourable Patricia A. Smith
Minister Responsible for
the Status of Women

Madam:

It is my privilege to submit to you the first annual report of the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat.

This has been a year of beginnings for the Secretariat, with all the challenge inherent in creating a new agency and planning for future progress. I believe the Women's Secretariat has now established itself as a co-ordinator and initiator within government, working co-operatively with other departments to increase opportunities for women in our province.

The staff of the Secretariat is proud of the progress and achievements of the past year, but we realize that it is only a beginning. In years to come, we will be building on these accomplishments as we look toward a future that holds the promise of true equality for all Saskatchewan people.

Respectfully submitted,

Leah Siebold

Leah Siebold
Executive Co-ordinator

Leah Siebold, Executive Co-ordinator of the Women's Secretariat

Introduction

The Status of Women

One of the most significant developments of modern society has been the progression toward equal status and equal opportunity for women. For many years, the strength, determination and commitment of women was focused primarily on their family and their communities. Increasingly, however, this focus has expanded to every facet of our social, cultural, political and economic life.

Today, women continue to provide the nurturing and support for their family as well as participate, at an increasing rate, in the labour force. Statistics for 1983 indicate that 52.5% of Saskatchewan adult women work outside the home, and that women represent 40.6% of the total provincial work force. In Canada, women are starting small businesses at a rate three times that of men, and their success rate is higher. Women are entering schools of business administration and other non-traditional areas of study in increasing numbers.

Despite these gains, the need for further improvement in the legal, social and economic status of women is generally recognized. The majority of women in the labour force are still employed in jobs that are traditionally lower paying. Women who choose to be homemakers find that society frequently under-values or ignores their contribution. Stereotyped views in the media often portray women as subservient, and, in many areas, attitudes influence the options and opportunities available for women to participate fully in our society. However, as society evolves and attitudes shift, there is increasing interest in, and support for, expanding opportunities.

In our complex and changing society, there is a need to develop and utilize the potential, skills and creativity of all people. Increased options and choices based upon respect for individual ability and aspirations, regardless of gender, have the potential to provide not only greater opportunity for women, but also for men, for families, and for society as a whole.

Models for Constructive Change

The federal and provincial governments in Canada have recognized the need to assist in enhancing equal opportunity for women. During the past few years, they have established separate departments offering programs for women. As a remedial measure, these have been beneficial in providing impetus for change. But there is a growing realization that, in the long term, women's needs and aspirations must become an equal and integral part of all government decision-making and policy development processes.

The challenge of the upcoming years is integrating matters of importance to women into the mainstream of our social and economic fabric. Many Canadian provinces have turned to the central agency structure as a way of meeting this challenge. Quebec established its Secretariat in October, 1979, and Ontario founded a Women's Directorate in May, 1983. Saskatchewan joined this trend in January, 1984, with the establishment of the Women's Secretariat. Since then, other provinces, including Manitoba, Alberta, and New Brunswick have also introduced central agencies.

The Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat

Legislative Authority

The Women's Secretariat Act was introduced in the Legislative Assembly in December, 1983. Effective January 1, 1984, **The Act** established the Saskatchewan Women's Secretariat as a government agency reporting directly to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The agency head is the Executive Co-ordinator, who has deputy minister status.

The Secretariat's Role

The creation of the Women's Secretariat reflects the government's desire to respond effectively to women's needs and aspirations. The Women's Secretariat assists the government by providing research, policy analysis and administrative support on matters related to the status of women.

The Secretariat analyzes government policies, legislation and programs for their impact on women. As a central agency, it works primarily within government to develop policies and plans based on the co-operative and co-ordinated efforts by government departments. It integrates women's concerns into government's decision-making processes and facilitates government-wide co-ordination on matters of importance to women.

While it does not offer services directly to the public, the Secretariat's activity within government results in more responsive programs for women in Saskatchewan.

Federal-provincial liaison is another responsibility of the Women's Secretariat. Staff regularly attend meetings with status of women officials from the federal government and the other provinces. This provides for an exchange of information, comparison of initiatives and methods, and co-operation on matters beyond provincial control.

A government-appointed advisory body, the Saskatchewan Advisory Council on the Status of Women, receives clerical and administrative support from the Secretariat. In addition, the Secretariat consults with organized women's groups to receive suggestions and ideas, as well as to explain government policy.

The Year's Accomplishments

Building the Foundation

The early part of 1984 featured all those challenges generally associated with creating and setting up a new agency.

The Executive Co-ordinator, Leah Siebold, was appointed effective February 1, 1984, with the other five staff members hired in ensuing months.

During the spring and summer months, meetings were held with executive staff of all government departments to explain the Secretariat's mandate and to initiate co-ordinated program development.

Integrating Women's Concerns

A key objective of the Women's Secretariat is integrating women's concerns into the mainstream of government policy-making and program development. To this end, the Women's Secretariat is represented on a number of interdepartmental committees reviewing government programs:

- Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence
- Interdepartmental Working Committee on Retirement Income Matters
- Standing Interdepartmental Co-ordinating Committee on Aging
- Department of Education, Guidance K-12 Reference Committee
- Interdepartmental Committee on Sexual Abuse of Children
- Interdepartmental Committee on Employment Development

Speaking Out Against Pornography

The growing prevalence of pornography has caused great concern in Saskatchewan and all across Canada. Particularly disturbing is the marked trend toward depictions of violence and brutality in modern pornographic material.

Control of offensive materials is primarily a federal matter, but the Government of Saskatchewan had an opportunity to speak out on this issue when the federal Fraser Committee on Pornography and Prostitution held public hearings in Regina on April 5, 1984.

The Women's Secretariat, in conjunction with the departments of Justice and Social Services, prepared a brief to the Fraser Committee outlining Saskatchewan's views. The brief, entitled **Respecting Human Dignity**, states that pornography and prostitution exploit human life and threaten the basic values of our society:

> "They promote a stereotyped role of men, women and children which is an insult to all who respect the dignity of the person and the value of positive, caring relationships.
>
> The anonymity of the pornography model makes us all the victims of pornography. Role models which portray the brutalization of women, the degradation of men and the victimization of children affect us all, and cannot be condoned.
>
> The laws surrounding pornography and prostitution - regardless of whether children or adults are involved - must strive to control these abuses, and thereby reflect the values of society."

The following is a brief summary of Saskatchewan's proposals for legislative reform as outlined in **Respecting Human Dignity**:

- Clarify the definition of obscenity in the **Criminal Code** to include depictions of violence, cruelty, and degradation and oppression, whether specifically linked with sex or not
- Because standards of acceptability for adult materials vary dramatically from one area of the country to another, the courts should apply the community standards test on a provincial, rather than a national level
- Strengthen the **Customs Act** and **Broadcasting Act** to prohibit importation of pornography
- Amend the **Criminal Code** to clarify the mandate of provincial and municipal governments in regulating the sale and display of adult material

In a further effort to bring attention to the issue of pornography, the Women's Secretariat and the Department of Justice submitted a government brief to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission and pay-television licensees. This brief urged the CRTC as well as licensees to adopt and enforce stricter guidelines and regulations against adult programming on pay-television networks.

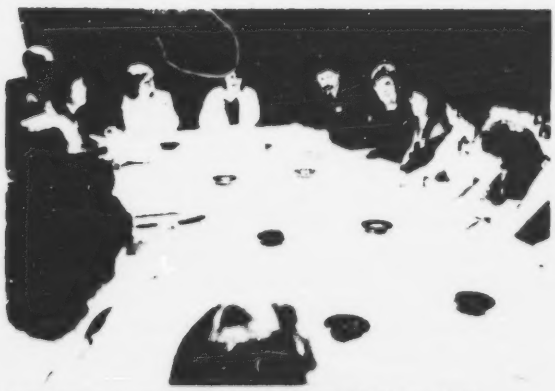
Dealing with Family Violence

Social and economic equality for women begins with ensuring their right to live in safety and dignity.

Federal studies indicate that one in ten women is abused by her spouse. Concerned about this situation, the Saskatchewan government identified violence against women as an initial priority for the Women's Secretariat. A total of $800,000 was allocated for programs to help those affected by family violence.

Recognizing that there are many aspects to this problem, the Secretariat initiated an interdisciplinary approach through an Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence. This included representatives from the departments of Justice, Health, Social Services, Advanced Education, Finance, Education, and the Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat. As Chair of the Committee, the Women's Secretariat had the lead role in co-ordinating policy and program development among these seven departments.

On June 14, 1984, the Secretariat sponsored a day-long Consultation on Family Violence in Regina. More than 80 representatives from women's groups, community service agencies, professional organizations and government departments accepted the invitation to attend the conference. Honourable Patricia A. Smith, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; Honourable Gary Lane, Minister of Justice; and Honourable Gordon Dirks, Minister of Social Services, addressed the meeting. Dr. Susan Painter, an expert on family violence, was the guest speaker.



Participants in the Training and Liaison Workshop at the Consultation on Family Violence stress the need for police, health professionals, and service agencies to work together in dealing with family violence.

A series of workshops at the conference focused on four areas: services for victims, treatment for batterers, special training for those who deal with family violence, and public education. The workshops produced many valuable suggestions and recommendations that were incorporated into development of new programs. A newsletter reporting the Consultation proceedings was widely distributed.

The following initiatives were developed by the Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence:

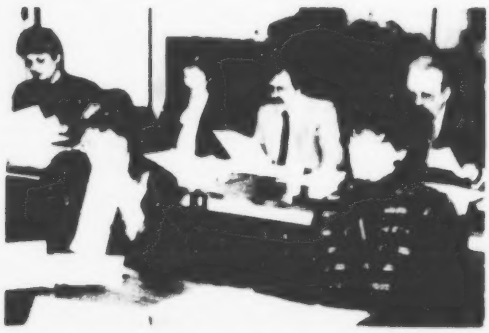
- Safe shelter for victims now operating in Yorkton
- Safe house project now operating in Melfort and area
- A core training package for police, prosecutors, teachers, social workers and health care professionals who deal with family violence
- Grant to Public Legal Education Association for public education on legal aspects of family violence
- Funds for legal assistance to victims in rural areas
- Directives for prosecutors to lay charges against batterers without a sworn statement from the victim
- Research project to study justice system response to cases of wife abuse
- Development of hospital protocols for handling abuse cases.
- A treatment program for men who batter

The Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence is monitoring the progress of these initiatives and continues the search for effective measures to deal with spousal abuse. It has also expanded its study to the problem of child abuse.

Planning for the Future

A major initiative is now underway with the development of a government-wide Plan of Action to Enhance Opportunity for Women.

The Secretariat is co-ordinating the efforts of a number of government departments involved in exploring matters of importance to women, identifying options and outlining policy direction for the future. Work on this important project began in the fall of 1984 and is expected to be completed in mid-1985.



Representatives from numerous government departments met on February 13, 1985, to begin work on a provincial plan of action to enhance opportunities for women.

The provincial plan will be submitted to the federal government which will, in turn, present a national plan of action to the United Nations Conference on Equality for Women, to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985.

Saskatchewan Advisory Council on the Status of Women

The Saskatchewan Advisory Council on the Status of Women advises the provincial government by suggesting measures to improve opportunities for women.

The Council formulates its recommendations after receiving input from public meetings, consulting with interest groups, and conducting independent research. The recommendations are submitted to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Honourable Patricia A. Smith.

First established in 1974, the Advisory Council is appointed by the provincial government. The present Council was appointed in November, 1983, and, for the first time, representatives from major women's groups across the province were selected as Council members. The 17 members come from various fields of expertise and from different geographical regions, reflecting the diversity of the province and the wide range of public opinion on various issues.

The provincial government provides funds for research and public consultations. The Women's Secretariat supplies the Council with administrative and clerical support.

Government Programs for Women

The Government of Saskatchewan offers a wide variety of programs which are available equally to men and women. In addition, the Government funds a number of agencies and programs designed specifically to serve the needs of women. Some examples are listed below.

Women's Services Branch

A branch of the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower, Women's Services Branch provides information and educational materials on women in the labour force. It assists women in accessing training and retraining programs and in improving their employment opportunities. The Branch also offers assistance to private sector employers who want to establish affirmative action programs.

Labour Standards Branch

This unit within the Department of Labour investigates complaints relating to maternity leave and equal pay legislation.

Affirmative Action

The Affirmative Action Branch of the Public Service Commission initiates and promotes programs to increase the representation of women, native people, and people with disabilities in the public service. This includes identifying and removing barriers to employment or career advancement.

On October 31, 1984, the Saskatchewan government announced it will begin development of a comprehensive affirmative action plan for the public service. The plan will be developed in co-operation with the unions which represent government employees.

Also, several provincial crown corporations, including SaskTel, SGI and Sask Oil, have developed affirmative action programs for their employees. These programs have been approved by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.